

SENIOR WORKER ADVOCATE OFFICE

Purpose

The purpose of the Senior Worker Advocate Office (SWAO) is to promote public awareness concerning the employment of senior workers and the importance of the aging workforce to California's skilled labor pool, economic development, and global competitiveness. The SWAO also advises the Director of the Employment Development Department (EDD) on issues relating to the employment of senior workers.

In addition, the SWAO publicizes the benefits of employing senior workers, disseminates information about successful senior worker programs, and dispels negative stereotypes of workers age 40 and over. The SWAO also promotes coordination and cooperation among agencies and organizations that provide employment information, recruitment, training, and placement services for senior workers.

The SWAO staff support the Senior Worker Advocate Council, which is composed of volunteer members representing business, labor, senior advocacy groups, veterans, and government. The Council advises EDD's Director on issues relating to the employment of older workers.

Background

The Senior Worker Advocate Office was established by EDD's Director to meet the Department's commitment to achieving full employment for all qualified workers, including older workers. The U.S. Census shows that California has more people age 50 and over than any other state in the nation. Data from the California Department of Finance shows that 21 percent of California's workforce is age 50 and over.

The SWAO staff is current on senior worker issues and strives to be California's foremost authority on topics concerning workers age 40 and over.

Major Activities

The primary goal of the SWAO is to promote the employment of senior workers in California. To accomplish this, the SWAO engages in various activities and projects, including:

- **Information and Referral.** Provides information and referral services to employers, senior workers, and public and private agencies that are dedicated to senior worker employment and training.

Resources for employers include:

- Referrals to senior worker sources.
- Information on best practices in firms hiring senior workers.
- Self-assessment guide to review company utilization of older workers.
- Speakers bureau on senior worker issues.

Resources for senior workers include:

- Networks to sources of jobs and training.
- Information on skills in demand.
- Referrals to resources for workers 40 and over.

- **Senior Worker Outreach.** Promotes public awareness regarding the employment of senior workers, including publicizing the benefits of employing senior workers through public service announcements; sharing information about successful senior worker programs; and dispelling negative stereotypes of older workers through news releases and public presentations. Effective employment practices and senior worker programs can be found on the SWAO section of EDD's Web site. Visit www.edd.ca.gov and click on "Services for Senior Workers" for further information.

- **Governor's Older Worker and Exemplary Employer Awards Luncheon.** Conducts an annual luncheon to recognize outstanding senior workers and exemplary contributions of employers that increase employment and training opportunities for workers age 40 and over.

The Governor's Awards are supported by private and public organizations, including the California Chamber of Commerce, the California Employer Advisory Council, the EDD Senior Worker Advocate Council, the California Department of Aging, the AARP, the California Commission on Aging, and the AFL-CIO.

Nomination forms for the Governor's Awards are available starting in September and can be requested via phone, fax, or downloaded from the Internet. For forms or further information about this annual event, visit www.edd.ca.gov. Once there, click on "Services for Senior Workers," then select "Senior Worker Advocate Office."

- **Educational Resource.** The SWAO develops and distributes literature relating to the job abilities and needs of senior workers. The Office has developed a training program called "The Silver Toolbox" that is geared toward eliminating attitudinal barriers to employment of senior workers. In addition, the SWAO coordinates a statewide media campaign

each September for National "Older Workers Week," and develops symposiums on important senior worker topics.

- **Technical Assistance.** Educates and collaborates with employers, labor unions, public agencies, the general public, and private sector employers regarding the work and training needs, abilities, and benefits of employing senior workers.

For more information, please visit the SWAO section of EDD's Web site at www.edd.ca.gov or contact:

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For additional information on EDD's services for older workers, please see the "Services to Older Worker Fact Sheet," DE 8714DD.